

<p style="text-align: center;">Wenatchee Diversity Advisory Council Inclusive Community Process 2009 – 2010</p>
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In December 2008, the City of Wenatchee Diversity Advisory Council embarked on a process to engage the community in a dialogue about diversity, inclusivity and steps the Council could take to truly reach their Mission and Vision:

**VISION STATEMENT**

Wenatchee is a community where diversity is welcomed, valued and celebrated.

**MISSION STATEMENT**

The Diversity Advisory Council advocates recognition, respect, inclusion and celebration of the greater Wenatchee area's diverse people

The Council wisely sought to engage community input in order to craft an Inclusive Community strategy incorporating a combination of town hall meetings, focus groups, training opportunities with partner organizations and a community survey.

In March 2008, the following topics were identified to be visited during the year:

April – Housing Town Hall

May – Focus group with NAMI / Mental Health groups

July – City Workshop on contracting policies, small works rosters, access to city business, building permit process 101 (with reps of the Office of Minority Business Assistance)

July – Focus group with PFLAG

September – Focus group with WDA/Chamber

September – Joint AVRHA training on Poverty

October – Joint meeting with School District regarding Gangs/Racism

October – Focus group with Youth/Aged

November / December – How Inclusive Are We – Business Recognition Feedback

Each Town Hall meeting was to be a gathering with an element of education and an opportunity to take public input. The focus group meetings were to be smaller gatherings designed to obtain specific input from protected classes with regard to their experience in Wenatchee. At the end of the year, the committee was to pull together all of the input gathered over the year in order to present findings in an "Inclusive Community Forum."

Phase 2 of work for the Diversity Council would then be to take the information collected and carry out a series of trainings and workshops that will explore the issues identified and help to building understanding.

A final phase will be to utilize the knowledge gained during the data gathering and educational phase to craft recommendations for a more inclusive and representative civic environment, and develop an annual forum / town hall meeting to gauge the success of the effort.

At the November 7<sup>th</sup> and December 2<sup>nd</sup> Diversity Council meetings the schedule was reviewed and recommendations were made for work in 2010. Overall, It has proven to be an ambitious but rewarding schedule. The following topics have been covered: Housing, NAMI/Mental Health and Gangs/Racism. There are reports that follow from each of these meetings.

Several other meetings were attempted but the July workshop had no attendees (should be done in January-February) and we lost the connection with the September workshop as our Diversity Council rep moved away from the area.

- July –City Workshop on contracting policies, small works rosters, access to city business, building permit process 101 (with reps of the Office of Minority Business Assistance)
- September – Joint AVRHA training on Poverty

Recommendations for work in 2010:

- 1) Hold quarterly town hall forums or activities instead of monthly activities due to the regular events the Council wishes to continue to support. The suggested schedule for 2010 is:
  - a. Carry out Martin Luther King Jr. Day – January 18, 2010
  - b. Finish up the Gang Task Force work and produce white paper for circulation
  - c. Survey businesses to determine a Diversity Training that could be sponsored by the Council
  - d. Carry out a Diversity Training program
  - e. Develop a Business Recognition Award to be given along with the Social Justice and Essay Award winners at Martin Luther King Jr. Day festivities
  - f. Leave room on the schedule to address one “hot item” that may arise
- 2) Conduct an annual update with the City Council
- 3) Circulate results of Inclusive Community work with affected agencies/organizations

Wenatchee Diversity Advisory Council  
Inclusive Community Process  
DATA GATHERING RESULTS – 2009 - 2010

Information Gathering Phase 1:

For each meeting, those comments that would pertain to activities that the Diversity Advisory Council could champion/sponsor are included in the reports below. There are records on file with the city for all comments recorded, but it needs to be clear that these comments pertain to activities the Diversity Council could take on. If the comments pertained to another department in the city, those comments were forwarded to the responsible department.

Meeting #1: Housing Town Hall – April 14, 2009

Focus groups were held around each of the impediments to fair housing:

#1 – Disadvantaged residents of mobile home parks lack protection for loss of housing/new housing opportunities in cases where redevelopment may occur

Feedback: Mobile home park residents are often protected class individuals and they need to be educated about fair housing rights.

There needs to be support and resources for those residents to get information when a park is being closed.

Diversity education would be helpful, so that the community does not stereotype residents of a mobile home park.

#2 – Rising Housing Costs –

Feedback: Much of the comment around the issue of housing costs related to zoning / land use policy issues that were beyond the scope of the Diversity Council

#3 - Disadvantaged Populations often lack Financial Literacy, English Language &/or Credit Mngmt. Skills to Obtain/Maintain Affordable Housing

Feedback: There are many programs and resources to help with this issue but they are underutilized. There needs to be more outreach to educate the community about resources and services available. The issue for the Diversity Council may be the education of the community related to not discriminating against those with issues in the past that could be corrected.

#4 - Lack of Understanding of Fair Housing Rights & Responsibilities

Feedback: There is a common theme for all impediments that fair housing rights and responsibilities need to be communicated. The Diversity Council could determine a course of action to assist with this.

#5 - Lack of Permanent Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities

Feedback: There are a number of needs that must be recognized including mental health needs, veteran's needs and housing for those with various disabilities which can be very broad.

## #6 - Insufficient Stock of Suitable Housing

### Recommendation: Annual Fair Housing Fair/Education

It was clear that there is much more need for the dissemination of information in regard to housing needs in the city and the understanding of fair housing rights and responsibilities. The Diversity Council could sponsor an annual "Fair Housing Fair" where there would be an overview of the law and an open house with representatives of various organizations to talk about their programs and efforts.

<u>Meeting #2: Focus group with NAMI/Mental Health Groups/Developmentally Disabled Groups – May 27, 2009</u>
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The following issues were identified for those with mental health issues:

Issue #1: There is a housing crisis for those with mental health / developmental disabilities.

Feedback: There is a true lack of available, affordable housing that would be made available to those with these issues. With the loss of funding for agencies and therefore, the ability to provide housing and 24-7 care that is required, finding housing is nearly impossible. In addition, transition and emergency housing availability is critical so that these folks don't become or remain homeless. Often these populations end up in emergency rooms, jail, substandard housing, etc where they are vulnerable. Housing affordability is also causing families to group without other support – risk to children and feeding dependency issues – abuse and neglect issues increase dramatically.

Issue #2: There needs to be education about those with mental health and DD issues so that more service providers and others are aware of the population and know the resources that are available to help.

Feedback: There is a stigma associated with these populations that make it difficult to obtain and keep housing. Fair Housing education would help to alleviate the stigma associated with these populations. In addition, education for those who regularly serve them: Emergency room workers, hospital/clinic workers, services (Catholic Family/Police department/School District/Judges)

Issue #3: There is a need to fund and provide space for supportive services and assistance

Feedback: There are opportunities ahead to collaborate and provide a place for supportive services for these populations and there are local agencies working hard to make things happen.

### Recommendation: Education

There need to be forums and opportunities to provide good, solid, factual information about mental health and developmental disability issues. There need to be opportunities to address myths and provide education about recovery (there are many great success stories). The Diversity Council and the City could help to educate and build support for these populations and making sure they are incorporated and their needs are addressed. These

populations are silent populations that need advocacy to communicate needs. Parkside could be a partial solution for the need outlined here.

<u>Meeting #3 – Empowering Communities – Gangs and Neighborhood Safety – October 27, 2009</u>
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This topic ended up needing a series of meetings which were sponsored by the Diversity Council which resulted in a Summary Report, available separately, with recommendations for community action. As a result, several organizations stepped forward to carry out pieces of the needed work on the gang issue. The Café group was endorsed at the April 7<sup>th</sup> Diversity Council meeting to begin pulling the community together and tracking on the issue. They will also report back to the Council monthly.